A MAY AND NOVEMBER CORRESPONDENCE

Sent to R. R. L. 9/20/30

REFERENCE LIBRARY OF

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

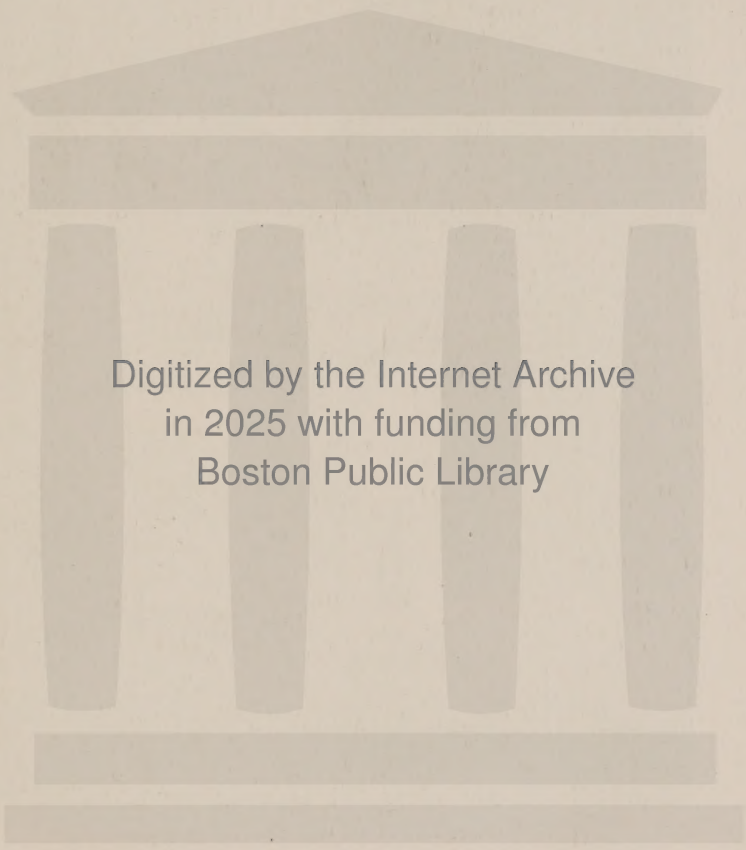
2 PARK STREET, BOSTON

NOT TO BE TAKEN FROM THE SHELVES
EXCEPT BY PERMISSION OF
THE LIBRARIAN

REFERENCE LIBRARY * HOUGHTON MIFFLIN CO. * BOSTON, MASS.
Archive
Collection

This book may not leave the Offices
and if borrowed must be returned within 7 days

A May and November Correspondence


Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025 with funding from
Boston Public Library

https://archive.org/details/maynovembercorre00rich

SPRINGTIME ON THE ACROPOLIS

A May and November Correspondence

DOROTHY HARDY RICHARDSON
ARTHUR SHERBURNE HARDY

Illustrated

THE COVER DRAWING BY
ELIZABETH SHIPPEN GREEN ELLIOTT

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press, Cambridge
1928

COPYRIGHT, 1928, BY ARTHUR SHERBURNE HARDY

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

The Riverside Press
CAMBRIDGE · MASSACHUSETTS
PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

THE correspondence between my little friend and myself is presented in its original form without change, in the belief that its charm as a human document would suffer from the intrusion of an editing hand.

Arthur Sherburne Hardy

IT is no slight thing when these little people, so fresh from God, love us.

DICKENS

ILLUSTRATIONS

Springtime on the Acropolis	*Frontispiece*
Facsimile of Letter by D.H.R.	2
Portrait in Silver Frame	4
On the Steps of the Propylæa	8
Asleep in the Moon	14
Iphigenia and Agamemnon	14
Prince Charming and the Sleeping Beauty	20

A MAY AND NOVEMBER CORRESPONDENCE

In younger days I oft was told
By sober people, wise and old,
That children should be seen, not heard;
Now, wise and old myself, I hold
'Twere very much to be preferred
They should be heard as well as seen,
And if perchance miles intervene,
Why, then, of course, 'tis very clear
Next best to seeing is to hear.

In 1890 a little girl, aged three, gifted with sufficient imagination to convert the foot-scraper at my door into a kitchen stove and to adopt me, aged forty-three, as her 'best friend,' sailed for Athens, and in that land of immortal youth, where she lived for eleven years, began a correspondence to which the remark of Lord Eldon, that 'female correspondence has a charm in it of which my sex is always devoid,' applies with singular felicity.

To the charm of sex mentioned by Lord Eldon, my correspondent added the charm of youth in 'prone and speechless dialect such as moves

men.' There is a further charm, the inalienable property of youth when, a candidate for nothing, it disports fearless and light-hearted amid the pitfalls of English orthography, adding the involuntary touch of humor to the most serious subjects. At an age assigned by Nature for the acquisition of language, be it Hottentot or Castilian, struggling with the French and German of a governess in an environment of modern Greek, she added the piquant sauce of idioms foreign to her native tongue. A prodigy? God forbid! She speaks the simple language of smiles and tears before the 'task of melancholy' is begun.

If it be thought that in the selections from this correspondence too frequent mention is made of trinkets and baubles, set it not down to vain ostentation, but rather to the artifice of the miser to hold fast the priceless gift of love and friendship so artlessly offered and, happily, later so confirmed that sordid motives were transformed into the pure joy of giving.

Athens Feb. 1892

Dear best friend,

Oh! how I thank you for the lovly dress all in satin and crape. I was so pleased mama tried it

Dear best friend

I thank you so much for the gold ring that you gave me. It is a buty. I love to were it. It fits me, and looks sweet on my finger. I like what is written inside of the ring. Thank you so much for the money. I have not desided what I will buy

FACSIMILE OF LETTER BY D.H.R.

with it. I want your potgraf
for the one I have is so small
I can not see your face. I love
you very very much. Lucy gave
me this paper that I am ri-
ting on. Good-bye loving friend.

Your loving

Dorothy. Hardy. Richardson

on and I turned arond the looking-glass and admired it. It is lovly. And the dressmaker made the bow lovly. I am invited to a cotillon at the Freanch School and I shall wear it for the first time and think of my best friend Mr. Hardy. I love you very much. Good bye loving friend.

Your loving
Dorothy Hardy Richardson

Poets have ransacked nature in search of a symbol for the heart of a child, for its purity, its candor, for all those tiny buds of innocent delight and feeling which render the young of every species so adorable; and it was fitting that this friendship should be sealed in its infancy with a ring.

Perhaps it was the thought that a portrait of myself at about the same age as that of my correspondent would appeal more strongly to her imagination than pure realism in the forties, that led me to select this vision of my own youth in response to the request for a 'photgraf.'

It happened to reach Athens shortly before the birthday for which it was intended, by the hand of one who, a few years later, shared with me the caption of these letters — also on the eve of a ball given in my correspondent's home, the

American School of Archæology, from which, for reasons better understood by fathers and mothers than by a little girl of six, the latter was excluded.

There is a sentence in one of de Maupassant's most pathetic stories which comes to mind whenever I re-read the following acknowledgment of the photograph asked for, 'Wait till you have something *real* to cry about.' It was addressed to a little boy who refused to be comforted, having just seen his little dog, the one friend and companion of his lonely childhood, crushed and dying under the wheels of a passing diligence.

The bearer of my gift was preparing to join the company in the ballroom. The music from the naval band of the English warship was just beginning, when there came from the room below the stifled sobbing of a little girl. Listening, did she recall one of those bitter disappointments of her own childhood, when the rebellious crew which threatened reason were yet untamed and the very structure of the world seemed tottering to its fall with the loss of her heart's desire? She could sigh now, when formerly she cried out. Sorrow was now no stranger. Should she wait till there was something 'real' to cry about? Not she! Not while a little mite was sobbing in the dark,

PORTRAIT IN SILVER FRAME

the music from the ballroom in its ears and a vision of lights and happy faces in eyes blinded with tears. Wait? — not even for a birthday close at hand, no longer than the time to take the silver frame from its hiding-place and put it in the hands of the sobbing little exile.

Athens 1892 Feb. 8

Dear best friend

I thank you ever so much for the lovly picture of you and the silver frame. I keep it on my table and look at the little hand crossed over your brest and the little curles coming down on your sholder. Whenever I have tears I go and look at it and it stops my tears. I dont think they ar many little girl's who have such nice a friend as you. When I write a letter I put in an H to my name. Give my love to your mother and keep lots more to yourself.

Your loving

Dorothy H. Richardson

Does any one ask the reason for the distinctions awarded in the captions and signatures of these letters? Fie! It is a woman's reason. It suffices to say that they appear in the latest as in the earliest, when, after the lapse of more than thirty

years, not even that second ring, to whose giving and taking I was privy, could displace the first from its finger.

Bourne, 1895

Dear Dorothy:

Such a dear letter from you today! I wish I had not become accustomed to use big words and long sentences as grown up people are apt to do, but could write such a letter as you write me. It would be just this: I thank you for liking the dress. I wish I could see you in it. I would like to have been there when you tried it on. I love you very much. And that would be all I have to say. Sometimes you say such wise things that I want to write you back as if you were not a little girl at all, and it touches me very much to hear you say your friend can 'stop your tears.' That is just what a friend loves above everything else to do, and some day you will learn something quite as true, that a friend can be so dear that the tears almost come in thinking of her.

I am sitting on a broad piazza looking out on the sparkling sea. Way off where the sky and water come together are some big ships scarcely moving in the light breeze. Close by, little blue waves are running up on the shore curling about

the stones and then running back again to tell what they have seen. Almost in front of the house is an old schooner that was once a brave, strong boat; but one day when the sea was very angry and the fog hung low it ran upon the sharp teeth of the rocky point and pounded a hole in its bottom. And now it lies over on one side, all dark and stained, and the rain beats down into its cabin. Sometimes, I think, it looks out over the bay and wishes it were young and strong again and could spread its white wings and sail away as it used to do. And sometimes I think it is glad to be at rest, with no more waves and storms to struggle against — nothing to do but watch the clouds and bay.

If my Dorothy were here this morning we would take a sail together, and I would show you how easy it is to steer the boat with her big sail spread like a wing, or we would sit on the piazza to watch the white sails, and the big loon chasing the little fishes about the bay, and the big eagle that has been sailing overhead in the sky all the morning; or we would walk through the fields where the wild roses are wide open to the sun, to the beach, and the crabs would stop a moment before scurrying away, to cross one claw before them with a bow and say *c'est ma faute.* But all

this is only a dream. All I can do is to shut my eyes and make believe I see my little girl splashing in the water — for I am sure you would not be afraid.

Your friend

Athens, 1895

Dear best friend,

I thank you for your kind sweet letter. I think you would like to see me, so I send you my photographs in my lovly green dress. I feel sorry you can not see the pritty coler in the picture. I send you two so you can give one to your mother if you can spare it. I will let you decide. I have your little picture on my table and I put forgetmenots and pansies beside it. I look at it very often. I am not at all afrade of the war.* I will always love you.

Your loving little girl

D. H. R.

That the green dress of 'satin and crape' was a 'buty' may be accepted on the testimony of its owner. It, however, and all other counterfeit presentments of my little friend must yield the

* Probably refers to the agitation preceding the Græco-Turkish War of 1897.

ON THE STEPS OF THE PROPYLÆA

place of honor to homespun caught by the sun-god on the steps of the Propylæa.

I present her proudly to the reader in the unadorned simplicity of playtime and that Greek atmosphere in which her young mind was nurtured. For, as will be seen, it was this atmosphere that inspired the brain behind the funny little face to choose as subject for her pencil, as did the decorators of ancient vases, the grief of the Mycenæan king who hid his face from the sacrifice of his daughter. If you look well at this mite, unconscious of futurity, you will understand why I once wrote her, 'Can you squeeze your eyes till all the fun runs out of the corners as you used to?'

Athens, 1896

Dear best friend

I thank you for the kind letters you sent me. It is quite cold hear now, but it has not snod yet. One morning it began to rain and hail. It did do quite a lot of damige at the river Ilisos. Lots of people were killed and houses were noked down. The werst of it was at the Pireas. Papa and G. went to the Pireas and saw piles of ded gotes and tirkes, dogs and other things. They saw a hat in a tree. I went to the Ilisos and saw two bed posts and a hol where three little children were re-

moved. It seems a pitty to think how the poor people suffer. The water was up to the peoples neks. The ones in there houses had to stay five owhers in thair rooms. They could not get out because the dors were swolen. Since the rain was over it is nice weather. The rooms by the river are full of mud. Part of our garden wall fell down. They are fixing it now. I am not having any lessons except I read French. I know french as well as English about. I hope you will come to Athens. Sometimes I wish you wold walk rite in my room and give me a good kiss. The first day you come I will not kiss you much for you will be tired, but the next day I will kiss you all I can. I can not think of enithing more. I maid a fu mestakes but I can not help it. I love you so much I could kiss you 100 times.

your loving little girl

D. H. R.

The foregoing invitation to walk 'rite into my room' was promptly accepted:

Dear little Dorothy R.!
The sea is wide and you are far,
But somewhere my sky touches yours,
So I launch my boat on its shining blue
And trim my sails to the thought of you
And steer to where you are.

The long white track of the Milky Way
Is the wake of my keel, and its starry spray
The flash of my dripping oars —
As I keep my course over shallows and bars,
Through isles of clouds and ripple of stars
And all that would work delay.

The Great Bear growls as I go by,
Old Taurus opens his blood-red eye,
And the kind Moon beckons me to stay;
But not Orion's belt of gold
Nor a drink from the Dipper in the sky
Can tempt me from the course I hold.

Just a second, Dorothy R.,
And far away as you think you are
My keel is aground on your chamber floor
And your 'dear best friend' has leaped ashore!
Are you fast asleep that you do not know?
I'll leave my boat, Dear, when I go —
Perhaps in a dream *you'll* go to sea
And sail it right straight back to me!

Although having already sent me the photograph in the green dress, as also that on the Acropolis, she next proceeded to describe herself in detail after her own fashion in an essay entitled

HOW I AM

I am a girl. I am in the shape of this (an anatomical diagram explained by reference numbers in

the text). The upper part of me is called head. On my head I have hear (10). Under that there is my eye (1). Then my nose (2). Then my mought (3). Then under that there is my neck (4). Then my head is finished. Only one thing more. That where my nose, eyes, mouth, and ears, is called my face. Now I will tell you about my body. Joyning my neck and body there are two long things. Those are called 'arms.' On my arms are fingers. I have five fingers. First thum, point finger, middle finger, ring finger, little finger. I use them when I write or read and eat. On the lef side of my head is my hart.

Whether from lack of time, or interest in legs, or from weariness, this vividly realistic description comes to an abrupt end — possibly designedly at the organ complementary to that with which she began, as it were, the conclusion of the whole matter.

On reaching the mature age of eight my little friend invaded the continent of literature by writing a book, illustrated in water-color, text and illustration done in her own hand, doing me the honor of dedicating it to her 'best friend.' It contained seven original stories entitled 'Little

Daisy,' 'Rover,' 'The Money,' 'Little Dorothy,' 'Rose,' 'The Mach' (The Match), with the suggestive sub-title 'You must mind what papa says,' and 'The Little Fox.'

The latter, showing the sad havoc wrought by the confusion of tongues, is here reproduced, with a facsimile of one of the illustrations.

The little fox

Once there was a little girl named Rose. She was eaght years old.
One day Rose teased her mother to let her go and see the King's little girl. And her mother sead 'the King would not like it.' Rose seaid he would be happy to see little girls. 'I can not let you go. So go out in the garden to get fresh eair.' Rose went out of the room crying. She went out in the garden, and sat on a big stone, and cried more and more. Then she heard a noise, and Rose tirned around and saw a fox. She was scared. He said come hear. I am afrade to come. He said dont be afrade. And he came near Rose and put his pors around her and said, where do you want to go? I don't now. Would you like to go to the son? Yes I would like very much. Get on my back and I will take you. It is very far Rose said? quite far. In how many hours dos it

take to get to the son? one hour. O I made fault, the moon is nearer than the son so will go to the moon first. All right. Pritty soon they reach the moon. Rose got off of the foxis back and got in the moon. The fox said we will sleep hear to-night and tomorrow we will go to see the son. Rose fell fast asleep for she was tired. Rose and the fox wok at the same time. Rose said god morning, god morning, now we will go on our journey. I don't want to go with out my corfy. Hear is some bred that I saved four you. thank you very much. The fox jumped off the moon and Rose screemed and jumped after the fox. She fell to the somewhere. O where am I. mamma! mamma! where am I. Rose gut up and told her mother what had happened. It is not true. It is. I know it is. I will alwas now how the moon looks 'Ha ha ha.'

Besides these novelettes were: The fable of *La Fourmi Vaniteuse* in French, with an original drawing of that proud insect perched on the horn of the ox; verses in German script, and a page in Greek describing the appeal of Iphigenia to Agamemnon for her life. This latter, with the harrowing portrayal of this tragic moment, is textually reproduced in support of the statement

ASLEEP IN THE MOON

Διάλογος Ἰφιγενείας καὶ Ἀγαμέμνονος

Ἰφιγένεια. Ὦ πάτερ, ἂς εἶχα τὴν μαγευτικὴν φωνὴν τοῦ Ὀρφέως διὰ νὰ συγκινῶ καὶ τοὺς γίβους μὲ τοὺς λόγους μου· λόγια ὅμως δὲν ἔχω· ἄλλο τί εἰ μὴ τὰ δάκρυά μου· μὴ μὲ φονεύσῃς πάτερ! κ. τ. λ.

Iphigeneia begging Agamemnon for her life.

IPHIGENIA AND AGAMEMNON

made to me by a distinguished Greek scholar, 'She speaks Greek as we do.' What! A little mite of six and Æschylus! What else? What did a Greek nurse know of Mother Hubbard or Jack Horner? Was not papa's caddy named Agamemnon, and were not Andromache and Epaminondas her playmates?

Finally this unique volume had its department of 'Walnuts and Wine,' lighter matter enlivening the serious text; with original riddles 'made up by Dorothy Richardson and the picturs,' and the dazzling promise

> How gessies thys riddle
> I will giv a prize.
> 5 lepta how gessies one
> 10 lepta how gessies too.

Tucked carelessly away at the bottom of one page, after the manner of magazine editors who utilize the Muse in filling out half-pages, is this:

> Read and yelow,
> Cath a fellow,
> Blew and white
> Hold him tite.
> Little things on
> Little wings
> Bear the sols to heven.

I would avoid inclusion among those commentators of obscure texts who read into them what certainly would astonish their authors. I merely call attention to the first four lines, whose close association with the last three can hardly be ascribed to accident and suggests the eternal feminine.

The last page contains the 'ancers to riddles' and the formal sentence

The end of this book.

This volume, in its brown paper jacket bearing the title, 'Little stories written by Dorothy H. Richardson, Athens, 1895,' above a tail-piece in color, of that vague significance characteristic of tail-pieces, was sent me with the following modest acknowledgment of my nocturnal visit:

My dear best friend,

I send you a book which I made all by myself. It is not good enuf for you. I wish you would come again to Athens.

your loving

D. H. R.

In the year 1896 my little friend passed into the shadow of one of those eclipses which test

human beliefs — typhoid fever. It was in this dark hour that the cavalier who sits beside her on the steps of the Propylæa climbed one morning, unknown to any one, the rocky slopes of Lykabettos to light a candle on its shrine for the recovery of his little sister. By order of the physician the 'curles' were sacrificed, but in executing this order, the attendant nurse saved one on either side of the face so that, as she explained, in the event of death the best possible effect might be had when the little body should be laid in its coffin. One can imagine the other effect which this feminine but professional forethought for appearances made upon the mother.

It was at this shrine on Lykabettos, where the gods were reputed to listen favorably to the petitions of mortals, that on a later occasion, to my indiscreet curiosity, 'What did you wish for, Dorothy?' she replied: 'I didn't wish for anything, I just wished.'

Boston, 1896

Dear Dorothy

Do you know I have not been able to write my little girl until I could feel that she was really better. How many times every day I have thought of you and wished — Oh, so many

things! that I could knock at your door and ask how you were that very minute. To know that you have had the best of care has not made it any easier to sit still way over here and just wait and wait and wait to hear from you. Often I have wanted to send your Mamma a cable to tell her not to let the joy for a day of gain lessen her prudence. I suppose she would smile to think of my telling her to be careful! You must be a patient little girl, not too eager to leave your bed and room. When one is getting better and stronger it is harder to be patient than when not feeling so well. So when the outside world begins to look very beautiful and enticing you must wait for the little body to get really strong before giving it even the work of play to do. My keys are still on the ring you gave me, and when I want a pin I open my pocket book and take it from my golden pin-cushion. Goodbye. You must ask your papa to tell you what that word means. The sweetest words I have seen for many a day are the little pencil ones in the corner of your Mamma's letter. To think that you could write them all yourself once more and that you are wanting 'things to eat!' It's a long time since I have been sick, but I know exactly how good it is to be out of bed, to move about and be

dressed, to go out in the warm sunshine and be well once more. When you grow up you will understand I should not dare to say *best* unless you did.

Your best friend.

I search these letters in vain for any but a passing reference to this illness. The anxiety and the memory were ours, not hers. As the sun follows the storm cloud, so instantly does shadow pass from the heart of a child. In the twinkling of an eye we are back again in the sunlight.

Athens, 1896

Dear best friend

I can not tell how pleased I am with the portfolio. When mamma shode it to me I cept saying 'Oh! mamma dear how nice!! how nice!' I like the D. H. R. on the outside and on the paper. The penholder is sweet. And the letter too. I wish you were hear so I could thank you for this nice present you gave me. I went to a Christmas tree over at the English School. I got a little niger savige on the tree. I got a lovly baby doll that mamma dressed. I got a paint box some dolls dishes and a set of bears. I don't think I

shall say more now, and I cant enyway for nothing else happened.

your loving
D. H. R.

It was perhaps this paint-box which inspired my little friend in her ninth year to produce her *magnum opus* — a calendar bound with the blue and white colors of Greece, with twelve 6″ × 8″ illustrations in color, all, with the exception of February, appropriate to the month — children building a snow man in January, chasing hats and clinging to inverted umbrellas in windy March, etc. It is as difficult to make a selection from this grotesquely accurate but mirth-provoking collection of humanity in all conceivable attitudes as it was for the party of American tourists, all of whom once besieged me for introduction to royalty, to choose a representative from their number. My choice rests on 'Prince Charming and the Sleeping Beauty' of February.

The noble bearing of the self-confident Prince, the evident somnolence of the golden-haired Beauty, and the acid countenance of the lady at the spinning-wheel tell the story. Only the merely mechanical features of this compilation, the lettering and figures below, were the contribution of

PRINCE CHARMING AND THE SLEEPING BEAUTY

an older hand. This labor of many hours of thought and love was sent with the following brief message:

Dear best friend.

I wish you a merry Xmas and a happy New Year. I shall love you every day in the whole year, and when you look at the calendar you must think of that. It is not good enuf for you.

Your loving Dorothy

On the announcement of a birthday the lover broke once more, as lovers will, into rhyme:

Dorothy dear, what's that you say?
Nine to ten in a single day!
I should think 'twould feel extremely queer
To grow suddenly old by one whole year!
It's a very good plan, I think, on the whole
That Time should flow smoothly to its goal;
Not by fits and starts or sudden shocks,
As the fidgety second hand does on clocks,
But softly, with such a gentle flow
We never know if we're old or no —
Never can tell when a little girl passes
Into the sweetest of grown up lassies,
Never are sure when we lose the one
Or when the other has just begun.
It's just like the stream that first a thread
Of silver in its mountain bed,

Widens and deepens, but evermore
Is the same dear stream it was before.
So whether it's ten or twenty-one,
Just Ducky or Miss Richardson,
Up to the very unknown end
You're my and I your

Own best friend

To escape the intense midsummer heat of Athens the R.'s fled, now to Poros, now to Carlsbad, Parten-Kirchen, or Switzerland, where in 1897 I had the good fortune, when on my way to Persia, to pass a few days with my little friend at Interlaken. Of her journey thither she wrote:

Geneva, 1897

Dear best friend

We had a very nice jurney. There were two little bears on bord. They came from Russia. I played with them. A saler put up a swing for me on deck. There is a paret on bord of all collers. We eat with the captin. We had a lovly time in Marsilles. it was so nice. One thing I liked is that there were bananas. I dident have any since mamma was in Egypt. When we got to Genever it was Saturday. Sunday the day after we went to church. We were standing up and I felt disy. so I sat down. I thought I would be better so. I dident speak to G. or L. I got

wers and wers. So I spoke to G. who was near by and I said I feel disy. I want to go home. So G. took me by one arm and L. by an other and we walked half way and I pretty nearly fainted. My feet trembeled quite a little but I did not lose my conshionse. L. told a strange man behinde her to call a caridge quik. so the cothman lifted me up on L's lap and we went home. We sent for the doctor and he said I was tired from the jurney. In the afternoon L. went to church again. L. asked for her handkerchif because she forgot it when I was sick. She told the man about how I was sick and he said a lady fainted and had to leave the church. Isent that funey. I am all write now. We saw on our trip three whales and a shark. I will always be your same little girl.

D. H. R.

And then, little by little, this child-voice begins to fade, as the flush of early morning fades before advancing day. May is slipping into June and November into December. It is a temptation in this year 1928 — but no, the rest is between us two. I leave her now as I left her once, a slim maiden, on the deck of a steamer on an infested sea, on her way to take charge later at Savenay of our blinded in the Great War. If I were over-

tempted to give you one last glimpse of the little midget snuggling up to her brother on the steps of the Propylæa, it would be on the boat-deck of the home-bound steamer, reserved for the disfigured victims of war. Walking with one of her blind charges, she hears a voice murmuring, 'I wish I had some one to walk with me,' and, leaving the blind for the mutilated, replies, 'I will walk with you.'

Emerson says:

> The tongue is prone to lose the way;
> Not so the pen, for in a letter
> We have not better things to say
> But surely say them better.

As I read these words of November, knowing November is very wise and reasons well, the voice of May floats in my window from the Garden of Memory, singing, singing, thoughtless of rules and reason —

Papa calls me a duck, so I rote a poim to sho I am not a duck

> The ducks have wings
> Ducks have them now
> I have non,
> But I will have them
> In lots of years.

Boston Public Library
3 9999 10503 210 4